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ABSTRACT

High school psychology cannot be considered the offspring of the American Psychological Association (APA) or of legitimate psychology in the United States. Although it originally discouraged the pre-college teaching of psychology, the APA now backs the venture. Improving the teaching of psychology at the high school level began around 1960 and continues in an effort to foster quality instruction and to upgrade the quality of human life by disseminating psychological knowledge in the school systems. International, national, state, local and individual support can be given by coordinating with foreign programs, disseminating information and offering institutional support at a national level, working with state education agencies, cooperating at the local levels with principals, school boards and teachers, and by the efforts of regional organizations and individuals. (SJM)

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High School Psychology: Stepchild or Offspring?

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Some remarks presented at a joint Division 2 and Division 31 symposium on Teaching Psychology in Public Schools, at the 80th annual convention of the American Psychological Association, in Honolulu, Hawaii, September 3, 1972.

Psychology has been taught at levels below college in this country in spite of the neglect of this endeavor by organized psychology, rather than with the support of the APA and other powerful institutions. The history of organized psychology's involvement in the precollege teaching of psychology, at least until very recently, has been a history of inaction, and often even a history of hostility.

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While courses in psychology at the high school level were a rarity some twenty years ago, nowadays they are almost commonplace. We hear estimates of the order of eight to twelve thousand people now teaching psychology courses in high schools, of one in four, or one in three, or even one in two high schools having at least one psychology course in its curriculum. We also hear, although no thorough nationwide survey has yet been done, that it is a rare high school teacher of psychology indeed who majored in psychology, that most high school psychology teachers have an inadequate preparation in the field -- instead, they were trained in social studies, history, civics, or government, or spent most of their preceding careers as athletic coaches. Let's face it: the typical high school teacher of psychology is poorly trained in psychology. But the typical high school psychology teacher is also painfully aware of the weakness of his preparation; yet he has had almost nowhere to turn for help, at least until very

recently. Although there were occasional valiant souls like T. L. Engle, William Gnagey and Louis Snellgrove who prepared materials and tried to respond individually to pleas for assistance, until the beginning of the 1970's there was no official APA effort specifically intended to help in significant ways with the now vast, and still rapidly expanding, precollege psychology teaching endeavor.

To answer the question in my title, then, "High school psychology: stepchild or offspring?," clearly the teaching of psychology in high school was not spawned by the APA or any other major psychological institution. It grew spontaneously in the grass roots, as students wanted psychology courses, and pressured their parents and teachers, who pressured the school administrators, who had to find somebody to teach such courses, or at least had to find ways to increase psychological content in other courses. This happened quite outside of organized psychology, and mostly outside the context of teacher preparation institutions. In no sense can high school psychology be considered the offspring of APA or of "traditional, legitimate" psychology in the United States. It is neither the accepted nor the natural child of such parentage. APA and U.S. psychology have had just about nothing to do with the fact that the teaching of psychology in the high school is now big, strapping, and growing.

Not only did "legitimate" psychology have precious little to do with engendering high school psychology teaching; it has even sought to discourage or destroy it. Until very recently, if you raised the question of high school psychology instruction with a typical long-time APA member, a likely retort was that psychology shouldn't be taught below the college level at all, indeed that it probably shouldn't be taught at least until the sophomore year in college. The most frequent stance vis à vis the issue of high school teaching of psychology, though, probably has been to ignore it, hoping that it will go away. I need

only point to the vastness of our audience here to make my point, though it is a good showing for an early Sunday morning meeting in Honolulu. It may more frequently be a matter of passive resistance than of open hostility, but psychologists do seem to have succeeded in keeping the potential stepchild, high school psychology, safely out of the psychology family. High school psychology teachers aren't psychologists; they don't belong with us; they can't be members of APA (other than "affiliates" of Division 2, which isn't really equipped to help them very much); they aren't properly trained; in fact, they shouldn't exist in the first place.

High school psychology is, then, not an offspring of organized psychology; it isn't even a stepchild. Rather, it has all too often been seen as a kind of undesirable excrescence that should, ideally, be gotten rid of, be decently buried, be discretely flushed away.

This caricature I have sketched is, unfortunately, not much of a distortion of reality, at least according to my experience during the last half a dozen years or so of involvement with various psychologists, committees, and APA offices.

But there <u>is</u> another side to the matter, of course; one could argue that it is high time for organized psychology to adopt high school psychology teaching as its stepchild, and to provide as rich a foster home for it as it possibly can. And, in fact, some major steps have begun to be taken in this direction. Things <u>are</u> looking up. The adoption papers are just about drawn up -- though it's still not clear where the money for supporting the stepchild will come from.

APA has finally realized that, quite aside from whether any psychologists think it should be done or not, psychology <u>is</u>, in fact, being taught at the high school level -- indeed at the junior high and elementary levels as well. Further, APA <u>has</u> finally acknowledged that it has a unique obligation to see to it that such precollege teaching of psychology be of as high a quality as possible.

APA's involvement in this venture, though, at least until very recently, has been very modest indeed. In the 1960's the Education and Training Board and Division 2 each had a Committee on Pre-college Psychology. The E & T Board's committee met once or twice a year, busied itself with such issues as finding judges for psychological entries in high school science fairs, and occasionally philosophized about how to prepare better high school psychology teachers. The Division 2 committee didn't have the funds for even a single annual meeting, but it did send out, on request, course outlines, suggested classroom demonstrations, and bibliographies on the teaching of psychology in the high school.

Then in the late 1960's the E & T Board committee began to think big, and proposed a skeleton "master plan" for developing appropriate curriculum materials and teacher preparation programs. After a 1967 NSF-sponsored conference which yielded little, modest funds were obtained from the U.S. Office of Education through the efforts of APA Central Office (mainly Al Boneau), to hold a meeting of ex-presidents of APA and a few other distinguished psychologists, to help provide visible sanction for APA's efforts in the pre-college area. The resulting December, 1969 statement on "Psychology in the Educational Venture" contained strong support for the high school effort; this statement was subsequently endorsed successively by the Committee on Pre-college Psychology, then the Education and Training Board, then the Board of Directors, and finally even by the Council of Representatives itself.

Meantime, the statement was used to obtain additional, though again modest, funding; during the last two years there has been impressive progress toward a responsible effort to cope more effectively with the growing clamor for help from the growing number of high school psychology teachers. A summer conference

in 1970 at Oberlin College resulted in a very useful sourcebook, published by APA, designed to provide information on such things as texts and books of readings, lab manuals, audiovisual materials, sources of equipment and supplies, and so on, appropriate for high school psychology courses. Rick Kasschau and Barry Markman volunteered to develop prototype curricular modules, one on the Black-white experience and one on reinforcement; this effort, also supported by the U.S. Office of Education, has resulted in preliminary drafts that are now being pilot tested. Meantime, the "master plan" that I had formulated in the late 1960's was revised and refined and re-revised and fleshed out by many people in many different roles (Sheldon Roen, Robbie MacLeod, Al Boneau, John Bare, Raymond Hunt, Russ Nazzaro, Henry Pennypacker, and others), as the pre-college psychology effort gained momentum; earlier this summer John Bare was named by the Board of Directors to coordinate the national effort, and I understand that an almost-final version of the proposal that came out of this process is nearly ready to go off to the National Science Foundation. Back in APA's Central Office, a Clearinghouse for Precollege Psychology was established as part of the Educational Affairs unit; it has been ably staffed by Margo Johnson, who was hired primarily for this purpose. She has also been putting together an excellent monthly newsletter, Periodically, that serves thousands of psychology teachers in high schools and other settings.

Many other things have been going on, and many other people, committees, and groups have helped the status of high school psychology begin to change from that of an outcast to that of a beloved, protected stepchild. Even though I have only mentioned a few of the things that the last couple of years have brought, they do show that we finally are beginning to get the stepchild fully accepted by the family.

Clearly, the reasons for adopting the stepchild have been compelling enough to convince a lot of people, and get them to devote substantial efforts to helping in this venture. What are some of these reasons?

First, as I've mentioned before, if psychology is indeed being taught in the nation's high schools, and of course it is, then the major psychological association should see to it that this teaching is of as high quality as possible. Second, and this is a very different, and perhaps even more compelling, reason: George Miller in his 1969 presidential address to the APA spoke for the growing social conscience of thousands of psychologists when he said that we must give psychology away to the public in a form in which it can be used for upgrading the quality of human life. After all, one of the official objectives of the APA is the promotion of human welfare; and our school system is, of course, a natural vehicle for the dissemination of psychological knowledge. The kind of knowledge that could be of inestimable value to every person includes such things as the power of positive reinforcement, the phenomenon of self-fulfilling prophecies, the effect of one person's expectations on the behavior of another, what works and what doesn't in efforts to resolve conflicts, how different people perceive the same set of events differently, and so on. Effective learning of such psychological principles in the high school -- and elsewhere -- can do much to help George Miller's dream become a reality.

Psychology does not, of course, have all the answers, and yet it does have much to contribute to making it easier to cope with many of the pressing social, personal, and interpersonal problems of our time. Above all, it has an orientation, an approach, that can provide a source of hope: behavior is, at least to some degree, regular and predictable; it is not entirely capricious; questions of human conduct need not be matters purely for speculation, or for the pulpit, or for mysticism, but can be dealt with evidentially and often empirically. We <u>can</u>

find out things about humanity and its nature, things that can help us get along more productively and humanely with our fellow human beings.

More and more of us are getting rather fond of our potential stepchild, and would like to help integrate it into our family. What can be done to hasten the adoption, and to nurture our stepchild most effectively? Different things in different contexts, of course; let me take a few minutes to review some of the kinds of efforts that have been or could be undertaken from the national level down to that of the individual psychologist.

I've already mentioned some of the things at the national level. Aside from general institutional support for the entire endeavor, there is the Clearinghouse for collecting and disseminating relevant information and materials and for responding to specific individual queries. The source book for secondary school psychology teachers, a supplement to which is, I understand, currently in preparation, is a useful resource. The monthly newsletter is disseminating timely and relevant information. There is the scheduling of program events like this symposium at annual conventions. The national curriculum development and teacher preparation project that has been gestating for at least half a decade, though still not funded, now has an official director, appointed by APA's Board of Directors.

Some things are also going on, and could be further encouraged, on the international scene. Psychology is being taught at levels below the university in many countries of the world. Explicit efforts to coordinate with foreign programs -- in Denmark, where David Wolsk, Jørgen Aage Jensen, and others are trying to improve pre-university psychology teaching; in Sweden, where Mats Björkman, Ingvar Lundberg, David Magnusson, Marianne Bauer, and others are engaged in similar endeavors; in Canada, Britain, Mexico, Japan, Australia, France, Germany and still other countries could well prove fruitful for all

concerned. Again, aside from individual contacts and joint international projects, international congresses could be used for the exchange of information and the exploration of approaches that might have worldwide utility.

Some regional organizations, EPA, MPA, WPA and the rest, could mount programs that speak especially to the high school psychology teaching efforts in that region, from regional committees through convention programs to special workshops and institutes for both preservice and inservice high school psychology teachers.

State psychological associations would seem to be particularly appropriate for contacts with state education agencies -- to help with state certification of high school psychology teachers, to cooperate with the state superintendent of instruction in upgrading the teaching of psychology in the state's high schools and in seeing to it that appropriate preservice and inservice teacher preparation programs are available, to serve as a state clearinghouse for initiating and coordinating workshops, summer institutes, and consulting services, to screen and provide information about the resources available in the state for supporting the high school psychology teaching endeavor, and so on. It seems to me appropriate for Division 31, perhaps in consultation with Division 2, to coordinate such an effort, encouraging, supporting, and wheedling as many state associations as it can to take part in the project. How about appointing a joint divisional committee to encourage involvement of state associations in the improvement of precollege psychology? There is much that the state associations could do, not just in their annual meetings, but primarily through committees or individuals charged with working directly with state education officials, legislators, and other influential people in the state house.

Efforts at the local level, while the impact is apt to be on a smaller scale, are the ones that will likely have the most concrete, visible effects. You can further the cause of improved high school psychology teaching by working with the

Board of Education, with individual principals, with the local school board, and, of course, with the local high school psychology teachers themselves. Obviously, what can be accomplished how and by whom in any particular locale will vary with the circumstances and resources, both human and other, in that particular local situation. But the resourceful psychologist with a bit of a social conscience can contribute, and significantly so, to the improvement of the teaching of psychology at his local high school. All it takes is a bit of time and initiative. That, I guess, is what it all comes down to. Individual initiative, and the willingness to give something of yourself and your time.

Let me mention some of the things I personally have done, or have thought of; though this may sound like I'm tooting my own horn, the intent is, of course, to illustrate the kinds of things an individual can do. Others, I'm sure, in other settings, have quite different opportunities. I was trained as a classical experimental psychologist, but eventually I found it impossible -- without getting a guilty conscience -- simply to do esoteric experiments on circumscribed classical problems; at least some of my time had to be spent lifting my head out of the sand and being aware of the social setting within which I have had the privilege of letting my curiosity guide the kinds of puzzles I would play with.

Making contact with psychology teachers at nearby high schools was easy. I've given talks to high school classes in psychology and sociology, and have consulted with teachers on demonstrations, books, and teaching materials of which I was aware. You can lend books, apparatus, films, slides, and help arrange field trips to local facilities that employ psychologists; you can serve as a contact for other psychologists who can give guest lectures or arrange open houses at various agencies. So one thing an individual can do, of course, is to work directly with local high school psychology teachers.

Another avenue is a little further removed from the grass roots. As a psychology professor at a large state university, I teach an introductory psychology course in a way that does not assume that this is necessarily the student's first contact with the field -- indeed, almost half of the 500+ students in my course last fall had had some contact with psychology in high school. I have also begun to bug the new Dean of our School of Education about a preservice teacher education program for high school psychology teachers in Colorado. And, as of September 1, I have a half-time job as associate director of the University of Colorado's Center for Education in the Social Sciences, a primary purpose of which is improving the teaching of social science -- including psychology -- at all levels from kindergarten through graduate school. This position will give me a crack at teachers of teachers of all subjects -- a useful resource, since an awful lot of behavioral science is, of course, taught implicitly and inadvertently by teachers of any subject, not just teachers of courses whose titles contain the word "psychology."

A third kind of involvement is extramural. There are lots of programs, committees, boards, and so on that have something to do with high school psychology. I was president of Division 2 in the mid-nineteen-sixties, and began to become aware of the magnitude, and the explosive growth, of the high school psychology venture. Later I served on, and for a year was chairman of, the E & T Board's Committee on Precollege Psychology. I've been involved in several ad hoc panels convened to discuss particular related issues. I helped draft various statements and proposals, such as the document on Psychology in the Educational Venture, the so-called "master plan," the proposals that eventuated in the Markman and Kasschau modules. For a year, I participated monthly in an effort at Illinois State University to design a social science teacher preparation program. As one of two psychologists appointed to the board of the now defunct CONPASS (the Consortium of

Professional Associations for the Improvement of Teacher Education Programs), I tried to further the cause of behavioral science teaching and to cooperate in cross-disciplinary collaboration; I learned a lot in this role, and was able to help obtain modest funds from the U.S. Office of Education, via CONPASS, to support several of the recent projects. I've been a consultant to some curriculum module development efforts. The most substantial involvement in these matters, though, was my spending a sabbatical year at APA Central Office as Acting Administrative Officer for Educational Affairs; I took this job in 1970-1971 with the explicit primary intent of trying to further the cause of pre-college psychology teaching.

A fourth kind of project was initiated by my hearing over and over that there is a need for more teaching materials at the high school level. A few years ago I ran across a new text in Swedish by Mats Björkman and others that struck me as highly appropriate: it was short, profusely illustrated, up to date, well organized, eclectic, and tied to real life examples; it made extensive use of simplified -- but not oversimplified -- descriptions of experiments, and had a strong explicit empirical, evidential orientation. I translated the work, changing much of the material to make it fit the U.S. scene better; Scott, Foresman published it last year with the title, "Psychology: A Brief Introduction." Just out is a study guide for the book, based on a workbook prepared by Marianne Bauer for a Swedish radio-TV correspondence course. And any day now an instructor's resource book, containing suggestions for course structure, summaries of major principles, chapter outlines, suggested further readings, test questions, and so on, should be out, too. Considering the rather horrendous amount of time I put in on the text, the study guide, and the teacher's manual, I do hope that the package will turn out to be useful to many high school psychology teachers.

Another book, for which I was general editor, has caught on to some extent in the high schools, and is also doing rather well at the college level, for which it

was designed. A book of readings for the introductory course, Scott, Foresman in 1970 published it as "Confrontation: Psychology and the Problems of Today." As the title indicates, the readings are not in the usual categories of perception, learning, motivation, and so on; instead, there are eight sections on such topics as identity and the identity crisis, conflict and conflict resolution, aggression and violence, man and technology, human control over human behavior; each section is edited by an expert in the field who wrote an introductory essay, selected a handful of recent excerpts from the literature (for each of which he wrote a headnote), and also prepared a closing "leading-edge" essay, summarizing the ways in which behavioral science has tried to cope with the issue and speculating about likely future directions. You can understand from this brief description, I'm sure, why the book was called the "relevance reader" by those of us who had a hand in it, and why it may have some appeal to the high school as well as to the college student.

Fifth, and finally, the individual psychologist can be an unabashed proselytizer. By now I've given quite a few talks like this one, with the hope of broadening support for the improvement of high school psychology teaching. There are many occasions for talking about the venture.

To summarize: The teaching of psychological content in high schools has grown enormously over the last decade or two, although organized psychology hasn't paid much attention to this development until very recently. Indeed, many psychologists were openly hostile to the venture; most were either quite ignorant of it or chose to ignore it. During the last five years or so, though, a movement to do something to help the plight of the high school psychology teacher has been gaining significant momentum.

The time is ripe for an all-out effort on all fronts: national, international, regional, state, local, and individual. APA has officially endorsed the venture, and has set up various offices and procedures to promote it. The improvement of

psychology teaching at the high school level is an issue of international interest. Regional associations can further the cause. State psychological associations are in a particularly favorable position to work with state education agencies. Local groups can cooperate with local education officials. The individual psychologist can consult with local high school psychology teachers, can work through his own institution in ways that foster better high school behavioral science instruction, can participate in committees, panels, boards, projects, and APA Central Office efforts, can prepare appropriate teaching materials such as textbooks, instructional aids, or learning modules, and can proselytize on improving psychology teaching at all levels, including in the high school. Let's all join together, and give at least some of our professional time to this pressing endeavor. Forward! Onward and upward!

Thank you for your attention.